

## COMMISSIONERS' BUSINESS MEETINGS: MINUTES

<b>20-Jun-05</b>		Attended: Commissioners Mrs J Eve (Chair), B Carlin, Mrs M Elliott, A Henry, S McDowell, J Steele. Secretariat: J McKeown (Secretary), Mrs J Dowling, Mrs E McKnight, P Lavery.
<b>Agenda</b>		
1. Introduction		
2. Minutes of Meeting held on 19 April 2005		Agreed as drafted.
3. Matters Arising	Nationality issue update	Commissioners were advised that an appeal had been lodged against Girvan J's recent decision. The appeal is not likely to be heard before the Autumn.
	Chairing SCS appointments	Noted Departments had been informed officially that Commissioners would be chairing all future SCS open competitions.
	Update on recent and ongoing SCS competitions	Information noted.
	Succession Planning	Proposals now with Rights & International Relations Division, NIO who will organise the competitions.
	Development of a Risks Register	Paper discussed. Commissioners to consider over the summer and provide comments to the Secretariat. For further discussion at the Business Planning Away Day to be held in November 2005.
4. Revised Recruitment Code and NICS guidelines to implement the new Code		The new Recruitment Code came into operation as from 20 June 2005, as did Guidelines for implementation of the Code prepared by the NICS for practitioners. NICS had held seminars on 14 and 15 June to launch their new guidance. The guest speaker had been Dame Joan Harbison, Chief Commissioner, Equality Commission with presentations also by the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of OCSC.
5. EQIA on the Recruitment Code		Draft agreed by Commissioners, as presented.
6. New General Regulations		A copy of the General Regulations 2005, signed by the Secretary of State, was distributed to each Commissioner.
7. 2004/05 Audit Programme	DFP Audit	Commissioners requested some re-wording of a draft letter to the Permanent Secretary, DFP on this recently completed audit, prior to issue.
	Disability Audit	Commissioners noted the findings of the interim report. They will discuss in greater detail at their next meeting when the full report will be available.
8. 2005/06 Audit Programme		Commissioners considered various topics for an alternative thematic audit to that on implementation of the new Recruitment Code which had been put back to 2006/07. Agreed on an audit of complaints and concerns raised by applicants for NICS appointments, in relation to recruitment procedures and practices.

9. Annual Report 2004/05		The cover, and photographs for inclusion in the Report, were agreed. Commissioners to consider the text individually and inform the Secretariat as soon as possible of any proposed amendments.
10. 5th Annual Report on the Section 75 duty		Draft Report agreed for issue, subject to a few minor amendments.
11. Screening Exercise on Code of Ethics Appeals Function		Discussed a paper prepared by the Secretary. Agreed to await the outcome of an NICS survey on staff awareness of the Code of Ethics before deciding whether to Screen Out the Commissioners' appeals function from EQIA. To be considered again at the September meeting.
12. Freedom of Information		Format agreed for placing minutes of the Commissioners' business meetings on the website.
13. Any Other Business	PSG meeting 27 May 2005	Useful exchange of views but lack of time had prevented some issues being discussed in full. Secretariat to confirm a date for the September PSG sub-group meeting as soon as possible.
	DHSSPS secondments	Commissioners were advised by the Secretariat that ambiguity had arisen over some secondments to DHSSPS as to whether the individuals were being appointed to the department or engaged in a consultancy-type role. It was agreed that the secretariat would meet DHSSPS.
	Exceptional Needs Exception: request from DFP	Request approved to extend appointment for a further year.
	Autumn meeting with RoI Commissioners	Date of visit confirmed as October 2005. Secretariat to liaise with RoI secretariat on a list topics for discussion. These will be considered at the September business meeting.
	Senior Competition: Director of Operations, Water Serv	Request from DRD to offer the successful candidate a small uplift in salary beyond the authorised range in view of the very limited market for this specific post. Request approved. Commissioners requested the Secretariat to convey to the NICS their view that, at an early stage of a competition, there should be an agreed appreciation of the market from which applicants were likely to be drawn and a recognition that salary levels might need to be set accordingly.
	Dates of future meetings	Next business meeting, September 2005; visit by RoI Commissioners, October 2005; Away Day Business Planning meeting, November 2005, subsequent business meeting, December 2005.
	Judith Eve CBE	Commissioners and secretariat congratulated Mrs Eve on her award of CBE in the Birthday Honours 2005.